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West Germans' decision key to European 'star wars' role

By Tom Diaz
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The future of European participation in the Strategic Defense Initiative — as well as the fate of France's similar Eureka Project — may lie in what a delegation of West German officials and industrialists decide this week.

After two days of talks in Washington, the delegation of 30 high-ranking Germans — 18 industrialists and 12 officials — split into four groups over the weekend to tour sites involved in the SDI program.

The group will return to Washington later this week to complete its official talks. Before leaving last Saturday, the group talked with senior officials at the Pentagon, State Department, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the National Security Council.

Although officials both here and in Germany played down expectations — describing it as a routine visit in a continuing series of such exchanges — informed sources said the Germans intend to decide on this trip whether a formal bilateral agreement on German participation is possible.

"They have made every effort to play down the visit in Germany," said one observer of German security affairs. "They have called it a 'working visit' and an 'exploratory visit' — all the terms designed to obfuscate what is really going on.

"My understanding is that they would like to walk away with all the items that would go into an agreement," he said.

The German government has already said that German firms are free to bid for SDI contracts if they choose, but experts in German political matters say German industry won't participate wholeheartedly without some kind of umbrella agreement between the countries.

The key points to be resolved during the current visit are:

- Whether the United States is willing to share completely technology involved in the research effort. The Germans have made it clear to U.S. officials that they don't want to

be relegated to the role of "subcontractors" who are fed bits and pieces of high-tech knowledge. In response to U.S. finger-wagging over the defection of West Germany's counterintelligence chief, the Germans wagged their fingers at U.S. embarrassment over the alleged Walker family spy ring.

- Business matters, such as patents and licensing rights. The Ger-

mans want to be sure that they get long-term technological benefits, as well as short-term profits from the potential billions to be paid out in the SDI program.

- U.S. assurances about the effect of the SDI Program on arms control, including the existing ABM [anti-ballistics missile] treaty and current bilateral negotiations in Geneva. The Germans want assurances that the SDI program will stay within research bounds until negotiations with Moscow make it possible to deploy new defenses without an

increase in offensive nuclear weapons.

Significantly, the German delegation is headed by Horst Teltschik, foreign affairs and national security adviser to Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

"Teltschik pulls all the strings," according to one analyst of German affairs. "He is perhaps the most powerful person in the [German] federal government after the Chancellor."

Mr. Kohl has given Mr. Teltschik responsibility for dealing with the SDI program, short-circuiting his own foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

"Bypassing the foreign office like this is about like the National Security Council bypassing Foggy Bottom [the State Department]," the analyst said.

Although U.S. officials insist that they regard the French Eureka program as complimentary to and not competitive with the SDI program, a German decision to throw its weight behind SDI would have consequences for the French program.